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L E T T E R

SUGGESTING

THE MEANS OF PREVENTION

AGAINST

CHOLERA.

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LONDON:

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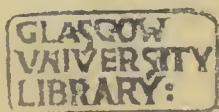
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M.DCCC.XXXI.

LONDON:

J. MOVES, CASTLE STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.



A LETTER.

AT the present eventful crisis, when that scourge of nations, the CHOLERA, has, in the course of the Lord's providence, already effected an entrance amongst the population of our native country, and when its desolating ravages in foreign countries create the greatest alarm in every reflecting mind for the results that may be justly apprehended, no apology is necessary for the present endeavour to direct my friends to that course which, according to my judgment, appears the most calculated to prevent their liability to that truly formidable malady. Prevention, in all diseases, is incalculably preferable to cure. How peculiarly does this hold good in a disease productive of such appalling mortality as the CHOLERA!

In suggesting means of prevention, the *first* great principle to which I would direct attention, is the extreme disorder of the BILIARY FUNCTIONS which in variably attends the CHOLERA.

Even in ordinary health, how great is the distress, depression of strength, and disturbance of the constitution, produced by what is termed an *overflow of bile*!

Obstructions of the biliary system, with an accumulation of biliary matter in the first passages of the alimentary canal, connected with, and arising from, costive bowels, is the originating cause of a whole catalogue of diseases, assuming the various *forms* of determination to the head, sickness, and retching, depression of strength, cold shiverings, at times severe fever, and at others excruciating pain in the bowels, with *spasms* and purging, and other symptoms unnecessary to enumerate, in various shapes, according to varieties in constitution, habits of life, and external causes operating at the time. The ordinary Cholera of this country is invariably more or less connected with biliary obstruction. That bilious diarrhœa, to which some constitutions are so subject, often attended with intense headach, giddiness, retchings, and frequent purging, sometimes with severe twisting griping pains in the bowels, and at times attended

with discharge of blood, is always owing to the same cause. A neglected state, therefore, of the biliary system, may be said to be at once the fruitful parent of disease, and the most unfavourable circumstance under which diseases arise. How often, under fevers and inflammatory affections, and other disorders, is an obstruction of the biliary system the most obstinate evil, requiring to be rectified as the basis of other curative means; and sometimes it is days, or even weeks, before the correction of this primary evil can be accomplished.

Apply these well-ascertained practical truths to the case of the *Cholera Morbus*, and the conclusion forces itself on the conviction, how important, as a means at once of preventing this malady, and of mitigating its dangerous character, and conducing to a favourable recovery, if seized, must be a *continued attention* previously to have the *biliary system in a properly regulated and healthy state*.

Those who neglect this precaution are at once more liable to the malady, and after being seized, have the most unfavourable prospect of getting through it. In most of the diseases peculiar to this country, we have ample time and opportunity to apply our measures deliberately, and in *slow* and skilful *succession*, so as gradually to remove those biliary obstructions which exist. But in the *Cholera* the patient is dead before those means, which with this view are the most effectual, can be applied. In ordinary diseases you can apply medicines to clear out the biliary system, and await their operation twelve, twenty-four, or forty-eight hours, before applying antifebrile or antispasmodic remedies; but in *Cholera*, a very few hours from the first seizure is all that you can calculate upon, in which remedies can be of any use. Every means, therefore, must be of the most *prompt* and *decisive* kind. It is not a case for half measures,—there is no time for *gradual* measures. Every means used, therefore, must at once be the most instantaneous in their effects, and the most effectual in their *power*, to arrest existing symptoms. In the use of anodynes and antispasmodics of the most effectual and powerful kind, it is of the greatest importance that the stomach and biliary system should be well cleared of disordered secretions and accumulated bile *previously*, otherwise opiates and anodynes, to allay pain and spasms, often produce most distressing consequences. In *Cholera*, however, there is seldom *time* to effect a proper clearance of the biliary system,

before the severity of the spasmodic symptoms renders the application of opiates and anodynes indispensable. This being the case, it is of the first importance to a favourable application of curative means, that the biliary system should be in a properly regulated state before the *Cholera* invades. Those who have taken this precaution previously, save the time necessary to accomplish the object after the disease may have seized them, and are in a condition prepared for the immediate application of anodyne and antispasmodic remedies, under the most favourable circumstances, and in the most safe and effectual manner. In attending to the proper regulation of the biliary system, therefore, my reader is at once (humanly speaking) adopting the most effectual means of prevention, and the most important precaution against the *possible event* of being *attacked by Cholera*.

The following general rules of regimen will be found of service, if carefully attended to, in regulating the biliary system.

1. The bowels should never be allowed to continue inactive beyond forty-eight hours; and some assistance to the alimentary canal, especially calculated to act in a mild and gentle, but direct manner on the biliary system, should be used at least twice a week by those who are subject to costiveness, or to bile in any of its irregularities, whether excess or deficiency. (*See prescription, page 13.*)

2. All sources of obstruction, or of irritation and disorder of the *biliary system*, should be carefully avoided in *diet*;—pastry, pickles, fruit, especially apples and subacid fruits, also all stone-fruit, shell-fish, cold drinks, and malt liquor that is at all turned. The fat of meat, except, perhaps, broiled bacon, is always indigestible to bilious people. Cheese is particularly so. Also oranges and other acids should be avoided, especially in cold damp weather.

3. Exposures to damp and wet are particularly calculated to disorder the biliary system, and ought therefore to be avoided. Damp feet, damp clothes, damp beds, are almost unavoidable by active people in our moist and variable climate. Many, however, instead of taking due precautions against such exposures, seem almost to invite disease by their carelessness, neglect, or mistaken habits. The use of thin shoes and stockings, standing *still* inadvertently while the ground is wet, or even walking on damp streets and roads, are the frequent origin of

spasms at the stomach, headaches, and biliary obstructions. Let my readers take good heed to these hints. Insufficient clothing, and exposures to rain without greatcoat or umbrella, either walking or riding, and, what is worse, sitting on coaches, in open carriages, aboard ships, or near an open window, and numerous other ways, are all errors which, in the prospect of *Cholera*, it becomes doubly necessary to guard against in every way. *Beds* on ground-floors, or in damp and insufficient houses, or situated near a window, or contiguous to the outer wall of the house, are almost invariably damp in the winter months. And nothing more creates alvine and biliary obstructions than damp beds. The practice of opening bed-chamber windows whole or part of the day, often without regard to the weather, so universally practised by servants, by way of airing the room, is a most pernicious one, especially in the winter months. Blankets and woollens so exposed, suck up damp like a sponge; and many a delicate and susceptible constitution suffers from this cause, while quite unaware of the least harm by it. The observation is the more necessary at present to be made, from the general *mania* for ventilation, to prevent infection, which the *Cholera* has excited. Many a bed-chamber window will be heedlessly thrown open with this view, under the certainty of increasing and extending the not less serious mischief of DAMP BEDS. Fires in bed-rooms twice or thrice a week, and airing the bed-clothes before it, are an excellent precaution. I have been in the habit for years of recommending to *delicate people*, subject to biliary disorders, and who are very susceptible to damp, to sleep on a large sheet of oiled silk, lined with flannel or fleecy hosiery, which can be aired every night, and effectually prevents the risk of damp beds. In dress, worsted stockings and *hair soles* are most useful in damp weather to those who are subject to bile and spasms at stomach; also flannels next the skin are indispensable. A warming plaster habitually worn over the pit of the stomach in winter, is very useful in cases where the stomach is weak and susceptible of irritation, and liable to spasms and cold flatulence.

4. Exposures to COLD are especially to be avoided. Cold is usually most injurious, and productive of biliary obstruction and other diseases, when the exposure takes place to *cold* or *damp currents* of air. Sitting opposite an open window, opposite an open door, or in the line betwixt the door or the win-

dow and the fire-place, or in heated rooms, or passages and halls, while perspiring, the draught of air immediately checks perspiration, and affects the biliary system or the alimentary canal;—all these ways of taking cold, as it is called, are so well known, that it only requires to arrest attention to the subject to secure the advantages of care. But there is a way in which this cause of disease operates in a very insidious but injurious manner, and not at all generally noticed or appreciated; *i. e.* exposure to currents of air during the night, from the position of the bed in *bed-chambers*. There is, perhaps, not one bed-chamber in ten over this kingdom, which is so constructed as to admit of the *bed* being placed entirely out of a draught of air. It invariably is either made to stand opposite the door, or betwixt the door and the window, or betwixt the window and the fire-place, or betwixt the door and the fire-place, or in a corner somewhere betwixt either of these points, in such a way as to intercept a current of air, circulating like a little whirlwind around the room for vent. This is a subject that has never yet received the attention which it claims. The person who sleeps in any of the situations I have described, is scarcely ever free from exposure to a hidden, unperceived cause of disease; and on every change of weather to damp or cold, is sure to suffer some form of *cold*. Rheumatism, stiff-necks, sore throats, coughs, morning sickness, headaches, fevers, biliary obstructions, spasms, nervous irritability, and a whole catalogue of sufferings, may often be traced, in the clearest manner, to this insidious and constantly operating cause. I believe if this matter were more closely observed, and carefully considered in its just and proper light, it would appear of incalculably greater importance and benefit than is at all supposed by those who have not been accustomed to such inquiries. If the *Cholera*, as has been alleged so confidently by some, be mainly or entirely produced by *atmospherical agency*, this subject of exposure to currents of night air, asleep in bed with the pores open, and the body oftentimes partially exposed, must be viewed as of the most direct and serious importance.

It is in general much more necessary and beneficial, than it is easy, to devise means of giving sufficient ventilation and purity of air, during the night, to a bed-chamber, and at the same time avoiding exposure in it to those currents which cannot fail to exist betwixt opposite points, at which a colder air rushes in,

and the heated rarefied air escapes. It is sufficient for my present purpose to guard my readers against an influence so injurious and so productive of disorder, as I have reason to affirm these exposures to currents of air in these circumstances to be. Moveable screens, double curtains on the side of the bed next the door, and sometimes a curtain over the door itself, or double doors, are all very easy and effectual means of prevention; while sufficient air may be admitted in such a direction as to create no current across the position where the persons are asleep. These things *deserve* immediate and careful attention.

5. Another cause, and a very frequent one, of biliary derangement, is excess of wine or spirituous liquors, or of malt liquors, especially drank cold in damp weather. Also all admixture of liquors, especially spirits after malt liquor, or wine after spirits, or *vice versâ*. All these imprudences and errors should be at this time especially avoided. The moderate use of wine, or of spirits and water warm, or even of malt liquor, to those only whose digestive organs are sound, and accustomed to that beverage, is of course adviseable rather than otherwise; and entire abstinence, especially after being accustomed to these kinds of beverage, would be prejudicial. The use of soda with malt liquor is very proper to prevent or correct acidity.

6. Mental causes have a most direct, and often a very distressing effect, in deranging the biliary system. There are many who, on any excitement of mind, a sudden alarm, or a piece of extraordinary or unexpected news, or disappointments, or other agitating causes, are immediately attacked with *bilious* vomiting or purging, and sometimes very severe symptoms follow.

In this way, *anger*, annoyance, *fretting*, anxiety, suspense, intense interest in public or private affairs, grief, and other exciting passions or emotions, are calculated to have a most injurious effect in the present eventful times; even the fear and alarm occasioned on susceptible and timorous minds by the advance of *Cholera*, may prove one frequent *aiding cause* to induce it, by predisposing the individual to nervous depression and biliary disorder, in places where its approach is dreaded. For further observations on this subject, see page 12.

7. The last cause I shall advert to, as productive of biliary obstructions and disordered stomach, is a torpid skin, obstructed perspiration, and want of due cleanliness. Those who perspire

freely ought to take every precaution that it be not suddenly checked. A perspirable tendency is often the result of general weakness, and persons so circumstanced are the more susceptible to disease from any sudden checking of the perspiration. Those who perspire little or none, should endeavour to restore that most salutary function, by adequate exercise daily, if in health; or by warm bathing once or twice a week, and warm clothing in bed, taking, of course, proper precautions to avoid cold afterwards. The use of the warm bath and of tepid bathing of the feet, on going to bed, are two most useful and salutary practices, which especially merit attention under the present circumstances. A warm bath once a week is quite enough; and immersing the feet in warm water each second or third night, on going to bed, ought by no means to be omitted.

In adopting means of prevention, the *second* great principle to which my reader is directed, is the great prostration of strength that invariably attends the *Cholera*.

This points out, in a very unequivocal manner, one primary and important method of prevention, to consist in the use of means calculated to keep up the powers of the constitution. That constitution which is overdone and enervated by disease, excess, or other causes, mental or corporeal, must be expected necessarily to be more susceptible of this formidable malady. This, all experience has confirmed. I shall make a few remarks on those causes which tend most to enervate the constitution, and, by consequence, to predispose to this disease.

1. Inadequate nourishment, either by low and poor diet, or by too little food. There is no more direct and effectual depressing cause than this; and whatever maxims and rules have been devised and enforced by medical and moral writers, as calculated to recommend abstemiousness and spare diet as a means of health, it will be found, on due and correct inquiry, that there are extremes on this side as well as on the side of excess, which, perhaps, have not been sufficiently considered in their injurious tendency on the human constitution. The use of animal food twice a-day, wherever practicable, seems quite consistent with a salutary moderation in diet; the moderate use of wine, and even diluted spirits, will be found by many very proper. Those who live too low will doubtless experience the advantage of a strengthening nourishing diet, as much as those who live too

full and high of a more sparing and moderate system. To recommend a medium adapted to all, by any general rule, is an idea quite preposterous. One man will maintain strength and health on half the diet which is indispensable to keep up another. And no general rule can be penned, which could supersede individual discretion and judgment.

2. The extremes of indolence and of exertion are alike sources of debility, and to be particularly directed, so far as practicable, by a salutary discretion. Great over-fatigue, especially attended with exposures to damp, to cold, to mental anxiety, and other such causes, are unquestionably to be regarded as predisposing causes of this disease.

Night-watching, want of due rest and sleep, are an extreme which every one knows to be prejudicial.

3. Insufficient clothing in cold and damp weather.

4. Confined, impure, marshy or damp air.

5. Mental excitement, anxiety, fear, grief, and the other depressing passions already noticed.

Here the advantages of quietude of mind, of firmness, and energy of spirit, are of the utmost importance to attain.

A *third* great principle to which my reader's attention is called, is that weakness or atony of the stomach, either from chronic dyspepsia, or excesses in wines, spirits, malt liquors, &c., or from watery poor diet, or the effects of insufficient clothing, damp lodging, exposures to night air, to damp wet weather, to damp feet, and a variety of other causes prejudicial to health, may be regarded as a *direct disposing cause of Cholera*.

To obviate and correct this evil, a weak dyspeptic stomach, is a matter of the greatest importance to all who labour under it. It is not only a disease itself, but a strong predisposing cause of more formidable diseases.

1. In correcting atony and debility of stomach, the first object is to attend to the biliary system, as already explained.

2. The use of some mild tonic medicines, adapted to the circumstances of individual cases. The calumba with soda and magnesia, and ginger, is a tonic of the most suitable kind in such cases. The infusion of sarsaparilla in lime-water is another most beneficial tonic.

In some cases, bark with soda or magnesia, either in hot or cold infusions, with warm aromatics, will be more effectual.

The addition of the nitrous ether (sweet spirits of nitre) is often very useful as an antispasmodic.

These three tonic medicines, as directed (page 13), have the additional advantage of correcting acidity at stomach, and tendencies to flatulence and spasm.

The sulphate of quinine also, with the addition of camphor mixture, cinnamon, or strong peppermint-water, will be found a most valuable tonic for those who might find the bark too heavy.

I shall not multiply general observations on the various other tonics, or combinations of tonics, that might be used. Those now described are all of a very mild and yet effectual kind; and under the precaution already so fully insisted on, of keeping up a proper regularity of the biliary system, and due activity of the bowels, will be found safe and beneficial in small doses, once or twice a-day on an empty stomach.

3. To counteract debility of stomach, a generous diet of solid and animal food is of great utility; as also the use of wine where within reach.

4. Nothing is of more consequence in this respect, than to protect the whole body against exposures to cold and wet, by a flannel under-dress all over, worsted stockings, and warm shoes. Many people are particularly inattentive to this important and salutary practice. It is a curious observation, made by those who have seen much of the *Cholera*, that it invariably seized those in the army who were careless in respect of diet and dress. It was found especially that the use of a bandage of flannel round the bowels was an almost invariable preventive in some stations in India. Those of the soldiers who adopted this precaution generally escaped Cholera; those who were seized were generally found to have been those who had neglected or who had refused to comply with this salutary though simple precaution. There are two points always most susceptible to atmospheric influence, and cold or damp—these are the pit of the stomach and the feet. Warm woollen stockings, thick shoes, and flannel or leather over the stomach and bowels, or a warming plaster in addition, where there exists a tendency to spasms, will be found of the greatest service.

In conclusion, I shall merely advert to the injurious and depressing effect of fear, alarm, and anxiety, not only on the general constitution, but on the *stomach itself*. In all weakened and atonic states of stomach, not only is the susceptibility to

fear and alarm much increased, but also the effects of these agitating passions, reacting on the functions of the stomach and other vital organs, greatly more felt. Contemplate the nervous tremor and agitation—the palpitation of the heart—the sinking of the powers—the tumult and agitation of the whole functions, which arise in debilitated and nervous constitutions under any sudden or extreme alarm, and there will appear abundant reason for the earnest advice, that those who live within the range of this formidable malady, should be careful to maintain tranquillity, firmness, and energy of spirit. It is more easy to advise this than to supply the means through which it may always be attained. But if the reflecting reader would endeavour constantly to bear in view, that this agent of death and of dismay is only the minister of God—the hand of *his* judgments stretched forth over the nations for their forgetfulness of Him, and their neglect and refusal of the voice of his merey in the glorious work of human redemption, through his adorable Son our Saviour,—if we remember this, and turn to the Lord with our whole heart, humbling ourselves daily before him, and seeking the outpouring of his Holy Spirit on our hearts, to enable us to live by faith on the Son of God, who is able and willing to save all who come unto him by faith, we shall, in realising this blessed and sure hope, be enabled to view this fearful scourge with the calm tranquillity and humble confidence of those who see in it a heavenly Father's rod, directed by infinite wisdom, and tempered by boundless mercy and compassion to those who put their trust in HIM.

The following Practical Directions are chiefly adapted to bilious and dyspeptic invalids. The alterative pill No. I. will, however, act most beneficially with a large class of sufferers afflicted with what are called nervous disorders. When the constitution has been enervated and otherwise impaired by excesses, or by chronic diseases, or extreme mental excitement, confinement to impure air, and other debilitating causes, the complication of nervous depression, irritability, and a train of disorders of an indefinable but distressing character, is often found to co-exist with a weak dyspeptic stomach. The judicious use of a mild course of alterative medicine in such cases, succeeded by, or combined with, some one or other of the tonics noticed, will often prove of the greatest benefit in restoring and confirming the general health, as well as in regulating the stomach and improving the tone of the digestive powers.

PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS.

In order to secure regularity of the biliary system, I recommend the pill No. I. to be taken every second, third, or fourth night, according to the state of the bowels; and to follow this up by a table-spoonful of the mixture No. II. the following morning, which dose may be repeated each third hour till the bowels are fully moved.

No. I.

R Pilul. Hydr. gr. iv.
 Pulv. Jac. veri, gr. iss.
 — Rhei, gr. ij.

M. ft. Pilula, mitte x. Sumat j. nocte alternâ vel tertiâ.

No. II.

R Infus. Sennæ C. ℥iv.
 Aq. Menth. Piper. ℥iij.
 Magnes. Sulph. ℥vj.
 — Carb. ℥ss.
 Tinct. Cardam. ℥iv.
 — Rhei, ℥j.

M. ft. Mistura. Sumat cochleare amplum aurorâ postera, et repetatur dosis horis tertiis, si opus alvum copiosè movere.

In cases where the stomach is weak and subject to flatulence and spasms, a warm carminative aperient mixture, No. III., may be preferred to the preceding.

No. III.

R Decoct. Aloës Comp. ℥ij.
 Aq. Menth. Viridis, ℥iij.
 Tinct. Rhei, ℥j.
 Magnes. Carb. ℥j.

M. ft. Mistura. Sumat cochleare amplum pro dosi.

Such is the aperient medicine to be adopted once or twice a week, according to the habit of body. After this has been adopted for two or three times, the use of a mild tonic is proper. The following powder may be taken twice a-day on an empty stomach, and is peculiarly applicable to bilious people, subject to indigestion and acidity of stomach.

